

# Official Minutes for Webb County Commissioners Court Special Meeting

Thursday, September 22, 2005 at 1:00 PM  
and continuing Friday, September 23, 2005 at 1:00 PM  
(Approved 12-12-2005)

- Item No. 1      Call to order by Judge Louis H. Bruni  
Let it be remembered that a regular meeting of the Webb County Commissioners Court was held at 1:00 p.m. at the special meeting place with the following members present to wit:

Louis H. Bruni	County Judge
Frank Sciaraffa	Commissioner, Pct. 1
Judith Gutierrez	Commissioner, Pct. 2
Jerry Garza	Commissioner, Pct. 3
Cindy Cortez-Brunner	Commissioner, Pct. 4

Thus constituting a quorum, the Commissioners Court proceeded to act upon the Agenda as posted in the meeting notice of the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2005. Present also were Ms. Nora Elia Prado, Deputy County Clerk representing Mrs. Margie Ramirez Ibarra, Ex-officio Clerk of the Commissioners Court, various officers and others interested in the business of the Court.

- Item No. 2      Roll Call – Margie Ramirez Ibarra, Webb County Clerk

- Item No. 3      Pledge of Allegiance – Led by All

Judge Bruni stated that Webb County and the City of Laredo had opened several shelters for those who have fled the coastal cities due to Hurricane Rita, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest storm in history. He stated that he would recess the meeting at 3:15 PM to be able to teleconference with the National Weather Service. He stated that all local hotels are currently at capacity. He stated that the following locations have been made available as shelters:

Gonzalez Middle School	Lyndon B. Johnson High School
Laredo Community College	Lamar Middle School
J.W. Nixon High School	Kawas Elementary School
Cigarroa High School	former Doctors Hospital (for elderly & ill only)
Several hotels in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico	

He stated that no Public Comments will be heard today and only Elected Officials and Department Heads will be allowed to address the court. He stated that the public would have the opportunity to address the court at Monday's regular meeting.

- Item No. 4      Commissioners Court Budget Workshop with discussion and possible action to make changes, if any, and as deemed appropriate by the court, on the FY 2005-2006 proposed budget and any matters incident thereto.

Mr. Raul Casso, Chief of Staff, stated that that a no-growth budget had been submitted in previous years but that this budget did show some growth. He stated that the County Auditor's and Purchasing Agent's department received some increases since the increases were approved by their respective boards. He stated that the budgets for County Courts at Law No. 1 and No. 2 also received increases since the judges' salaries were increased as well as their expenses by their respective boards. He stated that the District Attorney's Office had three investigators that were funded by grants would now be funded under the General Fund.

Cmr. Gutierrez motioned to allow the Mercy Ministries of Laredo and the Laredo Animal Protective Society make a presentation to the court. Cmr. Garza seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5-0 by unanimous consent.

Sister Rosemary Welsh, Mercy Ministries of Laredo, was present to address the court. She stated that their mission was to provide quality treatment for diabetes and hypertension. She stated that aside from screening services, they provide support services and education. She stated that their objective is to prevent and prolong the onset of the disease. She stated that their target group is aged 18 years to 30 years of age. She stated that by helping people keep their hypertension and diabetes under control, they will keep people away from the Indigent Health Care Program and out of the emergency room.

Cmr. Gutierrez stated that the Sisters of Mercy have served Laredo for over 110 years and that this is a new program to this community. She stated that the county has assisted them before by providing the mobile clinic for the colonias and asked that the court continue to assist this program. She stated that this program assists those who do not have any type of health benefits or assistance. She stated that they are looking into forming a Webb County Health District. She stated that this program will do a lot of good. He stated that the request made by the Mercy Ministries of Laredo was for \$150,000.

Ms. Diana Farias, Laredo Animal Protective Society, was present to address the court. She stated that they are totally committed to the welfare of Laredo and Webb County's pet population. She stated that they are working hard to make the animal shelter the best in South Texas and to serve as an example for all. She stated that costs continue to go up every year and are requesting additional funding from Webb County. She stated that they received \$32,000 in funding last year and were requesting an additional \$63,000 for a total of \$95,000.

Mr. Fred Flores, Laredo Animal Protective Society, was present to address the court. He stated that with the help of the City of Laredo and Webb County, they were able to erect 65 kennels, which are nearing completion. He stated that the animal shelter is prepared to accept an unlimited number of pets from Hurricane Katrina evacuees.

Judge Oscar Martinez, Justice of the Peace Precinct 4, was present to address the court. He requested an additional \$15,928.50 increase for his clerks. He stated that this would raise his Traffic Supervisor from \$13.00 to \$15.00 per hour and would bring his Office Manager to \$20,000 a year. He stated that he is on call twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

Mr. Rick Flores, County Sheriff, and Mr. J.J. Gonzalez, Sheriff's Department Comptroller, were present to address the court. Mr. Gonzalez thanked the court for their support and stated that their only request is for an increase for their nurses. He stated that there are currently three nurses and one head nurse but that there is a lot of turnaround since the salaries are not competitive with the private sector. He requested that the four slots be increased \$1.50 per hour which would total \$21,546.47 including fringe benefits. He stated that all the nurses are LVNs. Sheriff Flores stated that the nurses are currently working 12 hour shifts. Cmr. Gutierrez stated that this was a reasonable request due to the high demand of nurses in the medical field.

Mr. Rafael Perez, Chief Deputy Auditor, requested that all departments submit their requests to the County Auditor's in writing.

Ms. Nelly Virma, District Attorney's Office, was present to address the court. She stated that the Domestic Violence Unit has three attorneys which were funded by grants. She requested \$50,380 to cover the grant funding for one attorney since they received notice that the grant would not be renewed. She stated that they have seen over 3,400 walk-in victims, not counting children and as the population increases, so does the case load. She stated that the cash match was already allocated in the budget and is only requesting that the difference that was paid by the grant to be paid by the county. Cmr. Sciaraffa stated that this was a very necessary position that needed to be funded. Judge Bruni stated that Mr. Joe Rubio, District Attorney, had also submitted a request for an increase for the Private Investigator Officer position and that he would submit the information to the court.

Ms. Sonia Garcia, Assistant County Attorney, was present to address the court. She stated that they are requesting a slot for a Victims Coordinator which would take over the duties from the Juvenile Probation Office. She stated that they would also request an increase in Postage and Materials totaling \$5,000. She stated that she does not have the number of cases that they deal with since the office does not have a case management software.

Mr. Timothy Bland, Assistant County Attorney, was present to address the court. He stated that they are requesting a slot for a Mental Health Coordinator. He stated that their office receives approximately 1,300 juvenile referral, many of which are a result of mental illness or chemical dependency. He stated that this position would facilitate the intake of persons with any mental or chemical dependency.

Judge Bruni stated that chemical and alcohol dependency is a major issue and needs to be properly addressed. Cmr. Gutierrez stated that they need to work with mental health and drug issues. She stated that a juvenile and adult jail diversion program needed to be looked into since there are no long term or residential treatment centers to divert these persons to. She stated that they will continue to look for resolutions to these problems.

Mr. Mike Bukiewicz, Assistant County Attorney, was present to address the court. He stated that the number of Child Protective Service cases has more than doubled. He requested an additional attorney to assist with these cases as well as additional funding for children's clothing. They are requesting \$60,000 for an attorney slot and \$19,325 for clothing.

Mr. Rodolfo Rodriguez, Constable Precinct 1, was present to address the court. He stated that he is requesting two constable deputy slots. He stated that his office is assisting the Adult Probation Department in serving warrants as well as serve as court bailiff for the Cluster Court. He is also requesting that Slot No. 1266 be increased by \$3,342 so that it is at the same level as the other deputies. He also requested some new patrol cars. He stated that every vehicle in his fleet is from 1993. He stated that his office has twelve vehicles for twelve deputies to cover the largest precinct in Webb County and serve over 40,000 voters. He stated that he was concerned that the Constable for Precinct 4 had a higher operating budget for a smaller staff.

Judge Bruni stated that he would look into the matter and requested that Constable Rodriguez submit his requests to the County Auditor. He requested that two vehicles be included in the Capital Outlay requests. Mr. Raul Casso, Chief of Staff, stated that a side by side study was done of all the constables and will present this report to the court before Monday. He stated that they are currently developing a list for Capital Outlay.

Ms. Patricia Barrera, Tax Assessor Collector, was present to address the court. She stated that she was requesting additional Deputy Tax Collector slots. She stated that when she took office in 1993, her office collected \$26.9 million and that as of August 31<sup>st</sup>, her office has already collected over \$73 million. She stated that they will surpass \$80 million by the end of the fiscal year. She stated that she has never received any slots when requested and is only asking for four slots. She stated that everyone in her office is cross-trained and able to perform at least three tasks but feels that the slots are necessary since the county continues to grow and so does the work load. She also stated that there are several departments that have run out of monies for postage which means that she is out of postage funds for necessary mailings.

Cmr. Gutierrez stated that the Tax Office has a tremendous amount of work and works efficiently and that her request is very reasonable. Judge Bruni stated that her office is one of the most frugal in Webb County.

Mr. Ruben Reyes, Constable Precinct 2, was present to address the court. He stated that his office was in need of two additional deputies in order to continue providing proper security at the new JP building as well as continue service processing. He stated that he has four deputies and two are sent to each JP court. He also requested two new vehicles to replace the older vehicles he currently has.

Cmr. Sciaraffa stated that the new JP building is also in need of a bailiff. He requested that the requests be looked at closely due to the growth in South Laredo.

Ms. Cynthia Mares, Risk Manager, was present to address the court. She stated that the Health Insurance Committee has recommended increasing the county and employee insurance contributions to try and offset the deficit in the Employee Health Benefit Fund. She stated that even though the county was appropriating additional monies for the Health Benefit Fund, the county may still experience a shortfall since the number of claims filed is unknown. She also requested the reinstatement of the receptionist/office clerk slot that was assigned to another department.

Cmr. Gutierrez stated that the issue as well as a funding source needed to be looked at to be able to pay for the insurance plan.

Mr. Rafael Perez, Chief Deputy Auditor, was present to address the court. He thanked the Board of Judges for allotting them an additional Internal Auditor slot. He requested that the court approve an additional \$10,970 for this slot and that the monies would be offset by revenues received from the State Comptrollers unclaimed property. He also stated that the state Judicial District fees would be increased by \$1,220 and the Webb County Appraisal District funding was increased by \$46,700. He stated that the constable's incentive pay needed to be increased by \$36,814.

Mr. Rafael Vidaurri, Planning Department, stated that he will be bringing an increase of \$200 to the permit fees and that he would present it to the court at Monday's meeting.

Mr. Paul De La Peña, M.I.S. Director, was present to address the court. He requested a transfer of \$2.31 from Slot No. 1406 to Slot No. 2129. He stated that this would reduce Slot 1406 from \$15.31 to \$13.00 and increase Slot 2129 from \$13.65 to \$15.94. He also requested the reinstatement of a Service Technician slot under the Records Management and Preservation department. He stated that the new building will have a scanning station and requested that the slot be renamed to Records Imaging Specialist at a rate of \$10.72. He also requested the court's assistance in purchasing an imaging copier for his department.

Mr. Raul Elizondo, Maintenance Director, was present to address the court. He requested three (3) General Repair Persons slots at a rate of \$8.25 or \$8.60. He also requested additional funding for Building Maintenance. He stated that his budget needed to be increased due to the additional buildings that must be maintained as well as the higher cost of equipment and materials. He stated that his department has been able to have some savings due to good maintenance at regular intervals. He stated that a custodial slot that had been granted to his department last year was transferred to another department.

Ms. Margie Ramirez Ibarra, Webb County Clerk, was present to address the court. She requested a slot for a Vital Statistics Clerk. She stated that the local registrar duties of the Justices of the Peace would be transferred to her office and that a clerk was needed to handle these additional duties. She stated that her office staff has not increased from 16 deputies in the last ten years and that she could not impose additional duties to her current staff. She also advised the court that the Adult Probation Department would no longer collect court costs other than the probation fees. She stated by 2007, the county would need to set up a separate office or the District and County Clerk would need to collect the fines and fees assessed in court cases. She stated that a peace officer would likely be needed to assist in the collection of these costs. She stated that she would be submitting the Records Management Plan and Records Archive Plan to the court at the next meeting. She requested that \$40,000 be transferred from Professional Services to Computer Equipment under her Records Management budget. She stated that this would have no effect on the General Fund.

Ms. Delia Perales, County Treasurer, was present to address the court. She requested that the court allow her to restructure her office. She stated that she

would transfer funds from one slot to two other slots and that this would have no effect on the General Fund and would be from monies already budgeted.

Mr. Raul Casso, Chief of Staff, was present to address the court. He requested an Administrative Secretary slot that would be partially funded from Administrative Travel (\$20,500) and Part Time (\$15,000). He stated that only \$10,000 was needed to fund the slot.

Mr. Carlos Villarreal, Executive Administrator, was present to address the court. He stated that he would be bringing some figures for three (3) slots for garbage collections at Monday's meeting.

Judge Bruni congratulated Mr. Villarreal for his work with the Rail District board. He stated that the Mexican government has granted a rail permit at the Camino Colombia bridge.

Mr. Villarreal thanked the court for their support of this project. He stated that he would be requesting some additional monies during the bond issuance and will be looking into some grant monies. He stated that this project is moving at a fast pace.

Cmr. Gutierrez stated that Mr. Villarreal has done great work for the County and requested that the court consider allowing Mr. Villarreal to hire a secretary. She also stated that Constable Agustin 'Tino' Juarez submitted a request for a salary adjustment of \$5,000 plus fringe benefits for his Chief Administrator. She also requested a Library Technician slot for the Larga Vista Community Center's new library.

Cmr. Sciaraffa stated that he would also like to create a slot for a Library Technician for the El Cenizo Community Center's future library to be funded at \$100.00

Cmr. Garza stated that a new Community Center would be opening at Buenos Aires and requested two slots for the center. He also stated that a Public Information Officer and Human Resource Director were needed for Webb County. He stated that significant advances have been made with the Deputy Human Resource Director but that the county needed a Human Resource Director. He stated that Webb County has over 1,300 employees.

Cmr. Cortez-Brunner stated that the Penitas Community Center was in need of a Center Director and secretary.

Mr. Rafael Perez, Chief Deputy Auditor, requested that all the requests be submitted in writing by today so that a list can be submitted to the court by tomorrow morning.

## Item No. 5      Adjournment

Cmr. Gutierrez motioned to adjourn. Cmr. Sciaraffa seconded the motion.

Motion carried 5-0 by unanimous consent.